



galerie leonard
& bina
ellen
art gallery

SIGHTINGS 23

Struggles of the Work Table

A project by Alexandre Bérubé

January 25 – May 6, 2018

For SIGHTINGS, I continue a cycle of projects focusing on the work table, while considering the particular exhibition context of the cube and the possibilities and constraints specific to the transparency of its walls. These walls simultaneously reveal the cube's interior and exterior, but through distinct experiences of the gaze that uniquely reconfigure the relationship between visual, physical, and mental experiences. While the interplay of the gaze and perspective (the body's position, the *placement* of the gaze) are equivalent outside of the cube, they become disjointed on the inside – the space is accessible to the gaze, but inaccessible to the body physically excluded by the display module. The disjunction induced by the transparency of the walls is an opportunity to reflect on the potential autonomy of the gaze, its ability to project into an enclosed space, and even construct its own body.

I imagine a person, standing near this table, in an enclosed space. This imagined person, next to a table, in an imaginary space is what I call a figure.

The inside of the cube features an installation whose main motif is the work table, a basic element in the practice of visual art within a university context. Furniture and photographs are arranged much like in a private environment, and reference the table motif through their presentation or representation. Although it can't be physically inhabited by the viewers and students who frequent the building, the cube's interior is meant to be occupied by figures that are mentally projected through one's gaze. One of the installation's challenges is to use the arrangement of furniture inside the cube to generate a sense of presence, and even allow different figures to appear. This aspect of the project is based on two joint hypotheses: on one hand, the effects of presence are possible due to the imaginary projections of the gaze and by the superimposition of mental and physical spaces, and on the other hand, that mental space is where the aforementioned figures exist.

Presented on a surface doubling the cube's exterior faces is a pseudo-theoretical text that can be conceived as the early stages of a psychological case study about the installation space. This text explores a number of research hypotheses on the question of space within psychopathology,¹ based on the bodily and psychological relationship that I maintain with my own workspace. One of these hypothesis is that the loss or exhaustion of the self, which, among

¹ Reference to the title of a lecture by Ludwig Binswanger, *Das Raumproblem in der Psychopathologie* (*The Problem of Space in Psychopathology*, translation ours), delivered in 1932 and first published in 1933.

other things, characterizes the melancholic state associated with the artist and the erudite, is a spatial problem. Through the dissolution of the subject within space, I suspect that we generally live like imaginary figures—projected by someone else's gaze—that are indistinguishable from the mental environment in which they evolve.

Alexandre Bérubé

The artist wishes to thank Katrie Chagnon, Hugues Dugas, Michèle Thériault, Simon Brown, Jo-Anne Balcaen, Anne-Renée Hotte, Caroline Mauxion, Gilles Rivard and Danny Glaude, for their significant contribution to this project.

The text presented in the installation is available, in English and French, on the Leonard & Bina Ellen gallery's website, in the SIGHTINGS section.

ellengallery.concordia.ca/programming/sightings/?lang=en

BIO

Alexandre Bérubé is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Visual and Media Arts at Université du Québec à Montréal. He holds a research grant from the Fonds de recherche du Québec - société et culture (FRQSC). His recent installation projects are developed around furniture used by practicing artists in a university context. He investigates the relationships between the work table and the seated body by observing the gestures, postures and orientations involved in the regular use of institutional furniture. In order to study the phenomena of imitation and stereotyping specific to this context, he distinguishes between the biological and the symbolic body. In January 2017, he presented the first part of this research on the work table at l'Œil de Poisson, in Quebec City.